

PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION MINUTES

TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2003

Chair Mathewson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.

1. ROLL CALL:

Present, Commissioners: Mathewson, Gibson, Parsons, Frautschi, Torre, Dickenson,

Absent, Commissioners: Long

Present, Staff Community Development Director Ewing (CDD), Principal Planner de Melo (PP), Associate Planner Swan (AP), Recording Secretary Flores (RS) Attorney Jean Savaree.

2. AGENDA AMENDMENTS:

Motion: by Chair Mathewson second by C Torre to move 595 South Road forward.

Motion passed 6/0.

Absent: C Long

It was noted for the record that item 6B – 900 Ralston Avenue was moved to the Planning Commission Meeting of June 4, 2003.

3. COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments): None

4. CONSENT CALENDAR:

4A. Minutes of 4/15/03

MOTION: By Commissioner Frautschi, seconded by Commissioner Dickenson, to approve the Minutes of April 15, 2003.

Motion passed 6/0

Absent: C Long

5A. PUBLIC HEARING

5A. PUBLIC HEARING – 575 SOUTH ROAD

To consider a Floor Area Exception for a 243 square foot addition to the existing 3,463 single-family residence for a total of 3,706 square feet that is greater than the maximum permitted 3,500 square feet in the R-1A zoning district. (Appl. No. 03-0012)

APN: 044-212-020; Zoned: R-1A (Single Family Residential)

CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption per Section 15301, Class 1(e)(1)

Applicant/Owner: Corbet and Denise Cadwell

PP de Melo summarized the Staff Report and was available for questions.

Applicant/Owner, Denise Cadwell, stated the reason for this addition was to have a larger gathering area for family and friends in their kitchen.

Chair Mathewson stated that a significant expansion was done to this home in 1998 and inquired why the expansion was not considered at that time.

Mrs. Cadwell stated that funds were not available for the project.

MOTION: By Commissioner Parsons, second by C Frautschi to close the Public Hearing.

Motion Passed 6/0.

C Frautschi commented that he considered the history, previous development of the property and the Floor Area Exception analysis by the staff. C Frautschi stated that he could not find for findings 1 and 3.

For finding number 1, he felt it would result in the physical structure of the size that minimizes the significant of Belmont's 3,500 maximum Floor Area Ratio regulation. He felt it should only be exceeded in circumstances where the lot size is of the nature that warrants Floor Area Exception consideration. For finding number 3, he felt a grant of entitlement might further erode the 3,500 Floor Area Ratio rule by using this project as supporting evidence for future Floor Area Exceptions.

He further stated that the Commission was asked to use a comparison project at 640 South Road which was approved by the Planning Commission in 1998. As he did not have facts or details for their decision to entitle that property at that time, he could only base his decision for this project on what the rules were today.

C Gibson, stated that his sentiments are similar to C Frautschi's comments. If the applicant originally requested a variance of 3,700 square feet, it would be unlikely that it would be approved. However, he could find for finding number 1 and for finding number 3. He stated he would vote in favor of the project and he hoped that the applicant would be replacing the landscaping in the front.

C Parson, No Comment

C Dickenson, No Comment

C Torre, stated that she felt all of the finding could be made and felt that this project should be approved. .

Chair Mathewson stated that he agreed with C. Gibson's and C. Frautschi's comments.

MOTION: By Commissioner Parsons, second by Commissioner Torre, to adopt the Resolution approving a Floor Area Exception at 575 South Road, with conditions as stated.

Ayes: Parsons, Torre, Dickenson, Gibson,

Noes: Frautschi, Mathewson

Absent: Long

Motion passed 4/2/1

6. STUDY SESSION

6A. PRELIMINARY DESIGN REVIEW – 1405 SOLANA DRIVE

To consider a Preliminary Design Review for a new 16,000 square foot gymnasium building, and 1,000 square foot entry lobby addition to the existing multi-purpose building at the Charles Armstrong School, an existing private school facility. (Appl. No. 03-0023)

APN: 045-122-190; Zoned: PD (Planned Development)

Applicant: Mary Lou Orr

Owner: Charles Armstrong School

AP Swan summarized the Staff Report and was available for questions.

C Gibson commented that if the facility were to be used after school hours, or for evening events, it would appear to him to be an increase in the intensity of use.

As requested by C Gibson, AP Swan stated the three conditions (below), for community outreach. These conditions were requested by the Planning Commission at the November 19, 2002 meeting. She also confirmed that they have been adhered to.

The School shall conduct a minimum of one open house meeting annually in order to foster neighbor communication and continued neighborhood compatibility.

A report, verifying continued conditions of approval compliance, shall be generated by the school and presented to the Director of Community Development on an annual basis.

The school shall prepare and mail a calendar of special events on a quarterly basis to all property owners within 300 feet of the school property in order to notify neighbors of school events.

AP Swan confirmed for C Frautschi that phase one of the project is underway and not yet completed.

Applicant, Mary Lou Orr, stated there will be no changes in operations, use of the facility or in existing hours. She anticipated the enrollment for next year to be 242, 11 more students than today. She went on to state there were no plans to rent out the facility as liability and maintenance would be too costly. She went on to describe other changes mentioned in the staff report, then introduced the architect. She was available for questions from the Commission or Public.

Architect, Susi Marzvola described details of the project and the reasons for the site placement. She had several drawings and plans of the project in the room referring to them in her presentation.

Chair Mathewson called for a recess so the Commission could view the drawings.

Meeting resumed at 7:50 pm.

C Gibson stated that the Commission previously imposed conditions regarding communications with the community. He inquired on the progress. Mary Lou Orr replied, that she felt it was going great. She went on to say that they expanded the 300 square foot radius notification list/calendar events list to 1000 square foot radius. She mentioned that all conditions were being met and wanted to state that the parking lot renovation would begin this summer.

C Torre inquired if they considered moving the gymnasium to another location on the site. C Torre mentioned a specific location on the plan. Architect, Susi Marzvola explained that it was not possible due to fire codes.

C Torre asked why they chose the specific pitch of the roof. Architect Marzvola explained that it maximized the North light and got the high point of the building as far away from the neighbors as possible.

Chair Mathewson noted that this meeting was a Public Hearing, however he noted that no decisions were being made that evening. He stated that this was a Preliminary Design Review Meeting only.

Chair Mathewson noted, due to time limitations and the number of speakers for this item, each speaker would be given two minutes to state their comments.

Scott Johnson, 650 Dartmouth Ave, San Carlos, spoke (for group of 9) against the project.

Don Jones, 1815 Valdez Ave, at spoke against the project.

Robert Mayer, El Verano Street, did not speak for or against the project, rather he spoke regarding access issues to McDougal Park.

Margaret Allen, 1508 Chula Vista Drive, spoke against the project.

Christine Wozniak, 1408 Solana Drive, spoke against the project.

Bill Kramer, 2712 St. James Road, spoke in favor of the project.

Chuck Horton, 1050 Chula Vista, spoke against the project.

Jackie Horton, 1050 Chula Vista, spoke against the project.

Charles Borden, 1601 Chula Vista, spoke against the project.

Robert Abramovitz, 2501 Casa Bona, spoke in favor of the project.

MOTION: by C Parsons second by C Frautschi to close the Public Hearing

Motion Passed.

Discussion:

C Parsons stated that his principal concern is the size and bulk of the facility. He questioned its appropriateness to this location. He felt it was unusual for a private elementary school and to have a gymnasium. He mentioned several options, like putting the bulk of the building into the hillside at the end of the one building allowing some space there or sinking down the floor of the gymnasium to lower the bulk of the building vertically. He went on to say that even with the present configuration that that would be a positive impact. He further recommended they could move the building by not having that entrance on the roadside. They could move the buildings and the associated ancillary facilities closer to that road that would be used for fire and arrivals and departures. He questioned if a facility of that size was really necessary or could some of those activities be accommodated in existing facilities. He was concerned by the loss of parking for the park. He was unclear as to what the city's agreement was. He was aware of the agreement as far as the use of the park, but nothing on the reciprocal rights that the city had for using the parking and how much parking was agreed to when that arrangement was made. He felt staff should be looking into that matter. He stated that it was mentioned that some of the trees were under stress by being underneath the pavement. He recommend removing the pavement and not cutting down the trees.

C Gibson stated for the record that he had visited one of the neighbors on Dartmouth Street. He mentioned he visited the school site as well. He stated he had heard a lot this evening that the Commission would like to respond to, however the commission is under specific directions about what a Preliminary Design Review is. When the application comes to us we can then consider all comments from tonight's meeting. He stated they have three questions to consider: Is the land use appropriate for the site, intensity, and is the arrangement or distribution of proposed land use appropriate for the site? He stated that would ask the Architect to take a fresh look at it to see if there was another way to reduce the impacts on the community. He mentioned the use of story poles may be a good idea and wanted to state for the record that Belmont's ordinance only protects views from the public right of way, not private views.

C Dickenson, stated that he agreed with C Parson's comments and recommendations. He felt there were a lot of gaps that still needed to be filled.

C Torre felt they needed to re-visit site arrangement and work specifically on the fire rules. She would like to see if there is some way to move building off the back property line and moved closer to existing buildings. She stated that since there are students attending the school up to the 8th grade, she did not find it unreasonable for the need for a gym. She would like to see the height reduced and liked the idea of countersinking it into the ground. She felt the style of the building was too high tech for the property. She felt that story poles would be helpful for neighbors and her final comment was that she did not care for tar & gravel roof.

C Frautschi stated that he would like to know what the agreement is between the City and Charles Armstrong and the use of MacDougal Park. He stated his concern about the size of the gym. He commented that he would like to see phase one completed and effectively running to truly assess the impact to the neighborhood, before more structures are built on the site. He wanted to mention that the traffic calming study for Chula Vista is still being explored. He stated that he would not want to lose Charles Armstrong School, as he felt it is an asset to the Community. To address the arrangement he was concerned about the number of windows and amount of light escaping from the windows in the neighbors direction at night time. He recommended no lights on the South side of the building. He would like the gym shifted East, in the direction of the covered outdoor seating area, and move the outdoor seating area to the East side of the gym. C Frautschi ended his comments by stating that he felt submerging the floor was a good idea.

Chair Mathewson would like to see comparisons of new gymnasiums, from both San Carlos and Belmont areas to include heights, sizes, square footage sound from the HVAC equipment. He agreed with several commissioners on their recommendations and concerns. He thanked everyone for their comments.

CDD Ewing wanted to identify general topics that staff will be looking into when the applicant presents the new plans:

- Use
- Intensity
- Arrangement (placement, height, roofing, windows, HVAC Equipment)
- Access for MacDougal Park
- Timing of improvements

AP Swan stated that she would distribute copies of the Access Agreement with MacDougal Park to all commissioners. She would also research C Parson's request to see if there was a separate parking agreement between the school and the city.

C Torre and Chair Mathewson mentioned they did visit the site.

Chair Mathewson reminded the commission, when visiting the site during school hours, to sign in at the office.

8. REPORTS, STUDIES, UPDATES AND COMMENTS

C Torre stated that she will not be attending the June 17, July 1, or July 15, 2003 Planning Commission Meetings.

C. Gibson stated that he will not be attending the July 1, and July 15, 2003 Planning Commission Meetings.

CDD Ewing requested the Commission advise the Recording Secretary, at their earliest convenience, if they are unable to attend a Planning Commission Meeting.

C Frautschi commented that the Outdoor Recreation Task Force is down to their last three meetings and will soon be making a presentation to City Council. A random survey is currently being conducted with Belmont Resident's to record their preferences for the bond.

9. PLANNING COMMISSION LIAISON TO CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF TUESDAY,

June 10, 2003.

Liaison: Commissioner Frautschi

Alternate Liaison: Commissioner Dickenson

10. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m. to a regular meeting on June 4, 2003 at 7:00 p.m. at Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.

Craig A. Ewing, AICP

Planning Commission Secretary

Audiotapes of Planning Commission Meetings are available for review

in the Community Development Department

Please call (650) 595-7416 to schedule an appointment.